

## STSM Report

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**STSM reference:** *FP1201*

**Title:** *Forest owners involvement in spatial planning decision making processes*

**Working group:** *WG 1*

**Applicant:** *Nataša Lovrić, Brezje 15,44250 Petrinja, Croatia email: natasal@sumins.hr*

**Host:** *Prof. Dr. Werner Konold, Freiburg University, Faculty for Environment and Natural Resources, Chair of Landscape Management, Freiburg (Germany), werner.konold@landespflege.uni-freiburg.de*

**Period:** *from 01/07/2013 to 31/07/2013*

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### Abstract

This research aims to identify the forest land owners involvement within the spatial planning processes for Nature Park Medvednica, through assessment of their level of participation and way of involvement. Nature Park Medvednica is a mountainous protected area adjacent to Zagreb, the capital city of Croatia. Its spatial planning process was taken as an example case. The phenomenology of this case is its spanning onto thirty years long, three decision making attempts while this Nature Park struggles to hold back the pressure of urbanization. Medvednica was proclaimed as Nature Park because of its unique forest and unique phytocenosis protection in the first place. Because of the inexistence of spatial plan, which is required with the Croatian laws, its area was significantly decreased in 2009 and its territory was accordingly changed, which talked the question of the forest land ownership. There were no possibility of bringing spatial plan for 30 years but in the same time there was the chance for reducing its territory in really short time period and in fairly easy and fast way, by proclaiming it as urbanized and not important for the forest itself. Private forest land owners on Medvednica are very important stakeholder, who has great interests and owns space on Medvednica, and they should be fairly involved within that decision making process, they should be heard and allowed within the process itself. Medvednica at present time still does not have spatial plan brought into place.

### Purpose of the STSM

This STSM purpose was to identify the forest landowner involvement as stakeholders within the spatial planning decision making processes, through assessment of their level and way of involvement and identifying their issues and problems on that space. All that in great deal will be able to contribute to the research within the COST FP1201 FACESMAP

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action in particular in Working Group 1 work in this action, by clarifying possible ways of research directions on stakeholder's involvement and research questions identification.

**Description of the work carried out during the STSM;**

During this COST STSM mission in Freiburg the researcher was identify the forest land owner involvement within the spatial planning processes for Nature Park Medvednica, trough assessment of their level of participation and way of involvement. The study was conducted in the framework of stakeholder analysis, for which a series of semi-structured open-ended interviews with –forest land owners and makers of the spatial plan were performed and examined, as well as a review of policies and site specific documents were made. The general data gathered is the review of the relevant literature, reports and of historical data. The data gathered explained the disadvantages of the three processes of the spatial plan formulations, and in which way they were involving or not forest land owners within those decision making processes. Description of the past and current spatial planning situation of the NP Medvednica was given as well as issues of land owners involved concerning the creation of the spatial plan needs were identified. The key conflict forest land owner's areas that affect the formulation of a spatial plan were methodologically detected and examined. The level of forest landowner involvement was assessed as well as their possibility to influence this participatory process.

**Description of the main results obtained;**

Forest management in NP Medvednica is mostly in the hands of the state forests management company "Hrvatske Šume" Ltd. ("Croatian Forests"), while their activities are supervised by "Park prirode Medvednica" public institution. However, problems between them in the vast majority of cases occur in private forests, which are sometimes managed by their owners irrespectively of the legal obligations of private forest management, and there instances of illegal conversion of forest land into construction plots. Those plots, can be sold to interested construction companies, for fairly great price since it makes them an exclusive housing location for the high income Citizens of City of Zagreb.

Privately owned forests in Croatia are estimated with 120 632 ha. In 2007 the Forest extension service with its ten subsidiaries began to work, and its main activities where marking of trees in private forests, distribution of the "green tax" funds allocated for private forests, education of private forest owners, maintenance of forest roads, planning silvicultural operations and monitoring management of private forests. Forest extension service also encouraged founding of association of private forest owners, and kept a national registry of private forest owners. By the beginning of 2010 these activities enabled establishment of 36 local private forest owners associations, two county levels and one national association – Croatian union of private forest owners' associations. There exist another national level association – Alliance of private forest owners and forest owners associations as well as counterpart. The work of Forest extension service

was discontinued in August of 2010 by the amendment to the Law on forests, and majority of its employees have been transferred to the then established Department for private forests within Croatian Forests Ltd. Croatian Union of Private Forest Owners' Associations (Umbrella organisation) was founded on 7th of June 2008 as an independent, non-party interest organization of voluntarily assembled associations of private forest owners and land users, founded with the purpose of pursuing mutual interests of the Union's members under conditions set by the Act on NGOs and the Statute, which is a member of CEPF since 2013. Association's main goal is to enhance the quality and economical value of forests and forest products and improve management of private forests through planned associating and work of private forest owners' associations and forest users as well as cooperation in project implementation in the forestry field.

This research was based on semi-structured open-ended interviews with representatives from both organisations, placed on high ranks positions, as well as with stakeholders involved within the Spatial plan preparation processes. Every interviewed stakeholder had a chance to draw on a map its area of interest, while explaining what are his interests on that area and what will be his benefits and cost on that space. The stakeholders interest areas identification trough spatial and physical mapping on Medvednica was compared to the once that are being taken in consideration for the analysis of the last version of the spatial plan, and changes of the borders. Coincidence or not, the areas taken out of the old Borders of NP Medvednica are overlapping greatly with stakeholder's interest areas.

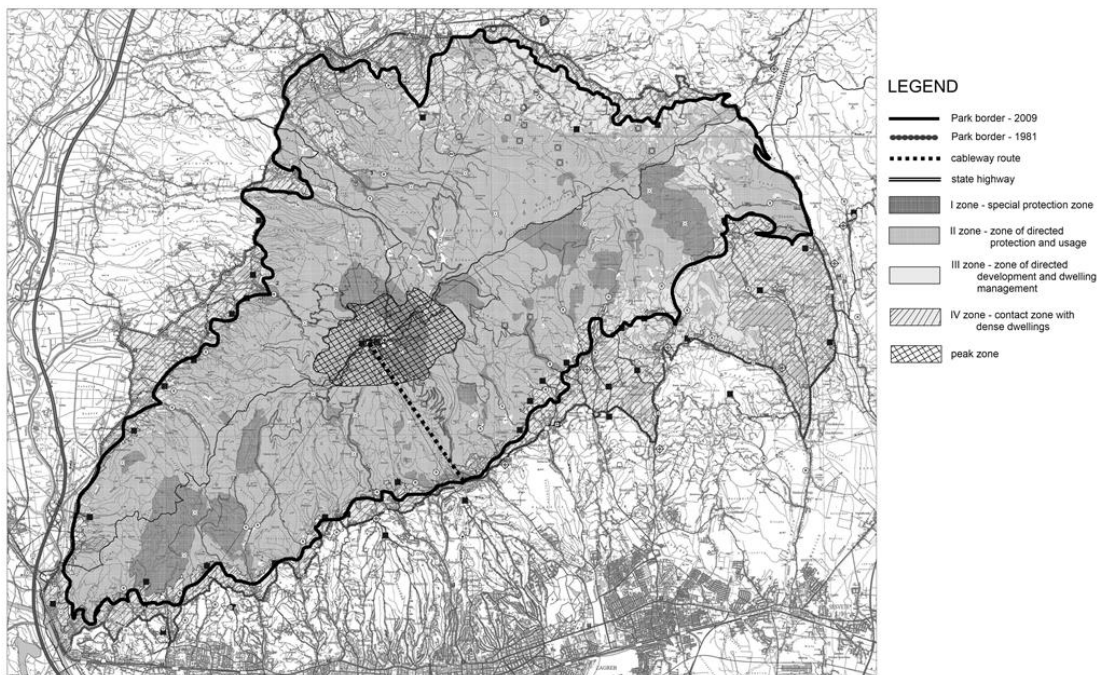


FIGURE 1., old and new NP Medvednica borders overlapping with stakeholder's interest areas

After transcribing and analysing the interviews we can see in the statements of the makers of the spatial plan interviewed in this case, that they are continuously claiming that it is fair and appropriate to involve stakeholders at the end of the preparation of the plan, since they are not professional enough to contribute. They were inviting private forest owners for separate sessions as well with each important stakeholder for a possibility of a

discussion with them. They were not applying the transparent way of involving all interested stakeholders' into one meeting, and giving them chance together to discuss the issues concerning them, so they could try to come up with common solutions. Both the union and the alliance, through their local associations representatives, were not interested in involving themselves within this particular decision making process, since they did not recognise it as transparent as well as beneficial for them, and with that it was not seen as important for them to appear to those meetings. They were also invited to attend the public forum in year, 2005 where NP Medvednica second draft of the plan was presented in front of the general public. On those meetings every stakeholder as well as citizen were given a chance to refer to their problems and issues concerning NP Medvednica spatial plan, but sadly they were not incorporated in the further versions of the plan. The interviewed in this case did not feel it was significant to show themselves at those meetings since it did not make sense for them to be involved at the end of the process where they could not have any influence on the process itself, on the other hand the creators of the plan interviewed in this case consider this kind of stakeholders involvement as rather relevant, transparent and sufficient. Although private forest land owners can be greatly represented in good manner by their association's representatives, they are not being given much chance for that in this NP Medvednica spatial planning case. On the other hand private forest owners that are not involved in the process of the spatial plan preparation in "proper way" are finding their own "bypassed" ways of self inclusion through "informal participation", in order to fulfil their interest on Medvednica.

Representatives of the private forest owners stake-holding groups think that is necessary to make the changes and involve the stakeholders and citizens in a "proper way" in decision making, and there are the comments on the bureaucratic structure that they are not motivated enough to practice proper involvements with the same financial support they receive. Strengthening the social capital and with that creating the Human Capital, as well as the better public education and informing, allows high level involvement in decision making processes. This step, of course, should cause changes in the organizational as well as in the legislation forms. It is difficult to motivate people in involving themselves actively in formal ways. Such attitude can be countered with enhancement of the information systems of publically available data and appropriate education and consultation of stakeholders through focus groups and seminars. What is necessary is a consistent and strategic approach to decision making, good legislative process when converting decisions into binding regulations and, finally, to encourage public involvement in the entire process to make sure that these decisions can take a hold in everyday society. It is necessary to identify all relevant stakeholders, in each sector, at all levels and clearly distinguish their responsibilities. Whenever possible, the public forums should involve all stakeholders (including private forest owners, citizens), NGOs and people from relevant professional background as well as the broad science community in every step of the decision making, not just by informing them of the outcome at the end, without them being able to influence the process, other than through fair incorporation of their interest and needs.

### **Future collaboration with host institution**

The collaboration with the Chair for Landscape Management continues until the carrying out the end of this research and hopefully beyond, since this research is part of the researchers PhD thesis work, who is also chairs official doctoral student. Furthermore, the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources is directly involved within COST FP 1201 FACESMAP action and the collaboration will continue until the end of this action with the parties involved.

### **Foreseen publications/articles resulting or to result from the STSM**

The Chair of Landscape Management claimed a wish to publish the results from this mission as well as the entire research results that will come out from this PhD thesis work in form of Monograph publication in English language, after finishing the entire research process, with emphasis on this COST FP1201 STSM contribution to that work in the part for private forest landowners involved within the decision making process. Some published articles with them together are also expected as outcome from that research.

### **References**

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**Other see:** Appendix 1

**Appendix 1. Letter of confirmation by the <Chair of Landscape Management > of the successful execution of STSM.**

Professur für Landespflege, Universität Freiburg, D-79085 Freiburg



**Chair of Action  
FP 1201**

**Dr. Gerhard Weiss**

**Letter of confirmation by the Chair for Landscape Management,  
Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources, Albert Ludwig  
University in Freiburg, Germany, for the successful execution of  
STSM for Nataša Lovrić M.Sc.**

Dear Dr. Weiss,

with this letter I confirm that the Chair of Landscape Management, Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources, Albert Ludwigs-University in Freiburg, Germany, hosted Nataša Lovrić at her COST FP 1201 FACESMAP, STSM mission. The early stage researcher and MC member Mr. Sc. Nataša Lovrić in the period: 01.07. 2013 - 31.07. 2013 worked together with me on her research mission and fulfilled the obligations for her STSM: FOREST OWNERS INVOLVEMENT IN SPATIAL PLANNING. Currently Nataša Lovrić is a PhD candidate at the Chair of Landscape Management, and this mission was also beneficial both for fulfilling the COST FP 1201 FACESMAP STSM, mission and for adding to her PhD research work which belongs to the same subject.

Best regards

Prof. Dr. Werner Konold

Professur für Landespflege

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